

Claims

1                   1. An apparatus for translating a first set of part numbers into a second set of  
2                   part numbers for use in a design collaboration and supply chain management network, including

3                                    a set of client devices, wherein each client device included in said set is under the  
4                                    control of a user who wishes to engage in a business transaction that requires the usage of a part  
5                                    number;

6                                    a dedicated server remotely coupled to at least one client device included in said  
7                                    set of client devices, wherein said dedicated server provides a hub in said design collaboration  
8                                    and supply chain management network;

9                                    a database coupled to said dedicated server, wherein said database includes a set  
10                                   of proprietary part numbers, a set of universal part numbers and a set of associations between  
11                                   said proprietary part numbers and said set of universal part numbers;

12                                   a computer program coupled to said database, wherein said computer program in-  
13                                   cludes instructions for translating said part numbers;

14                                   a communications network, for remotely coupling said set of client devices and  
15                                   said dedicated server.

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17                                   2. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein each universal part number included  
18                                   in said set of universal part numbers is associated with one or more proprietary part numbers in-  
19                                   cluded in said set of proprietary part numbers.

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1                   3. An apparatus as in claim 1, also including a translation module for trans-  
2 lating one or more part numbers associated with an order into different part numbers that the re-  
3 cipient of a document readily understands.

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5                   4. An apparatus as in claim 3, wherein said translation module is used to pre-  
6 pare commercial documents.

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8                   5. An apparatus as in claim 4, wherein said apparatus also includes a man-  
9 agement module and rule base that identifies what parties may create associations between part  
10 numbers and enter new part numbers.

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12                   6. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said part numbers are associated with  
13 the titles of people who provide a specific service.

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15                   7. A method for translating a first set of proprietary part numbers over a  
16 network, including steps of

17                   receiving a first set of proprietary part numbers from a client worksations, wherein

18                   a user of said client workstation wishes to engaged in supply chain management, design collabora-  
19                   tion, or the purchase or sale of services or fungible goods;

20                   checking a database for said first set of proprietary part numbers;

21                   translating said first set of proprietary part numbers into a universal part number;

22                   determining the availability of a part associated with said universal part number;

23                   generating a document summarizing a transaction involving one or more parts as-  
24                   sociated with said universal part number,

1 translating said document from said universal numbers into a proprietary part  
2 number included in said set of proprietary part numbers; and  
3 storing a record of said transaction in a database.

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5 8. A method as in claim 7, wherein each said universal part number is associ-  
6 ated with other part numbers such as may be associated with different suppliers or manufacturers.

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8 9. A method as in claim 7, wherein said database includes a translation mod-  
9 ule for translating one or more proprietary part numbers associated with an order into different  
10 part numbers that the recipient of a document readily understands.

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12 10. A method as in claim 9, wherein said translation module is used to prepare  
13 commercial documents.

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15 11. A method as in claim 7, wherein said database includes a management  
16 module and rule base that identifies what parties may create associations between part numbers  
17 or enter new part numbers.

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19 12. A memory, including a set of instructions executable by a processor, said  
20 set of instructions including instructions for  
21 receiving a first set of proprietary part numbers from a client workstations,  
22 wherein a user of said client workstation wishes to engage in supply chain management, design  
23 collaboration, or the purchase or sale of services or fungible goods;  
24 checking a database for said first set of proprietary part numbers;

1 translating said first set of proprietary part numbers into a universal part number;  
2 determining the availability of a part associated with said universal part number;  
3 generating a document summarizing a transaction involving one or more parts as-  
4 sociated with said universal part number,  
5 translating said document from said universal numbers into a proprietary part  
6 number included in said set of proprietary part numbers; and  
7 storing a record of said transaction in a database.

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9 13. A memory as in claim 12, wherein each said universal part number is as-  
10 sociated with other part numbers such as may be associated with different suppliers or manufac-  
11 turers.

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13 14. A memory as in claim 12, wherein said database includes a translation  
14 module for translating one or more proprietary part numbers associated with an order into differ-  
15 ent part numbers that the recipient of a document readily understands.

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17 15. A memory as in claim 14, wherein said translation module is used to pre-  
18 pare commercial documents.

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20 16. A memory as in claim 12, wherein said database includes a management  
21 module and rule base that identifies what parties may create associations between part numbers  
22 and enter new part numbers.